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RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE  
RUEHHO/AMCONSUL HERMOSILLO 1893

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HERMOSILLO 000286

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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/MEX; EMBASSY MEXICO FOR POL (PEDRO MARTIN),  
MCCA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [MX](#)  
SUBJECT: HERMOSILLO -- OBSERVATION OF JULY 2 NATIONAL AND LOCAL  
ELECTIONS

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1. (SBU) Summary: The voting process in Hermosillo, as observed by Consulate teams, was clean and fair and managed well at neighborhood polling stations. Transit voters at "casillas especiales" experienced long delays and frustrations but showed an admirable determination to vote, some waiting seven hours to do so. Preliminary results show that Sonora (and Hermosillo) strongly favored PAN's Felipe Calderon for president. A strong plurality of Sinaloa voters also appears to be for Calderon. The PRI, however, apparently has won the mayoralties in Hermosillo, Obregon, Navajoa and several other key Sonoran cities, a payoff for PRI Governor Bours' control of the local party organs and strategy of maintaining distance from the PRI national organization. End Summary.

AN EXCELLENT PROCESS, EXCEPT AT CASILLAS ESPECIALES

2. (U) Consulate Hermosillo fielded two teams (PO Clarke, Vice Consuls Quinlan, Dubose, and Bliss) to serve as accredited election observers at "casillas" (polling places) for the July 2 elections, national and local. The teams visited 21 sites in a variety of neighborhoods throughout Sonora's capital city, some containing multiple casillas. These sites were for voters in the local mayoral races, as well as the contests for the Mexican presidency and federal senate and representative positions. Included in the observer teams' visits were five to "casillas especiales" (special polling places) where voters in transit and away from their designated stations, or who had changed domicile, could vote.

3. (U) All the neighborhood casillas visited were models for a democratic voting process. Polling officials seemed knowledgeable and careful about eligibility procedures and were courteous and appropriately helpful to voters. The voting system contained safeguards, and was fair, transparent and well watched over at every step by representatives from the competing political parties, and officials from the Federal Voting Institute (IFE) and the local Sonora State Electoral Council (CEE). The only election posters on any site were IFE and CEE material and there were no illegal attempts observed to coerce or influence voters in their choices.

4. (U) While representatives of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) were more numerous at most stations, and were observed to be more organized and aggressive in reviewing arrangements at the openings of casillas observed by the Consulate teams, there were no serious disputes observed. When a PRI observer challenged a National Action Party (PAN) observer's use of a voting list to observe local registration

verification, the PAN official immediately desisted and called his headquarters for guidance. Indeed, various observers commented that the communication between party representatives in this election was the best they had ever experienced. We observed that level of cooperation throughout the day, including during the vote count at one polling station, where the tabulation was done in an entirely fair and careful manner by the voting officials in front of the party representatives. While some small glitches occurred, the Consulate teams scored all the neighborhood casillas in the 7-10 range on the 10 point Embassy scale for overall management.

15. (SBU) The worst problems observed in Hermosillo were at the five "casillas especiales", where hundreds of voters waited for up to seven hours to vote. Officials had vastly underestimated the number of voters who would use these sites, and provided only one laptop computer to verify voting credentials and one voting booth. In sharp contrast to the neighborhood casillas, these sites seemed chaotic. The IFE officials present seemed unwilling to take a stronger role to ensure the process maintained its integrity. There were complaints that the computer programs were slow in the morning and, even where the Consulate teams observed processing of voters at a clip of one every 40 seconds later in the day, that proved not to be adequate to quickly reduce the lines. At the airport casilla especial the computer broke down completely and officials went to manual processing. Rumors circulated that insufficient "president only" ballots (750 at each casilla especial) were on hand, but that did not appear to be the case at the one casilla especial where a Consulate team stayed hours after the official closing. At that station, however, IFE officials made no special effort to turn away voters who got into line after the 6 pm official cutoff.

16. (U) Comment: Even at the trouble-plagued casillas especiales, the strongest impression was of the determination of hundreds of voters to put up with any inconvenience in order to vote. Some left, but most were willing to wait patiently, and for the most part were relatively cheerful. Even one young man

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who complained in vulgar terms about the delay to one of our team, in the end, stayed several more hours and, when he was done voting, was all smiles. This attitude of the Mexican voters was perhaps the best and most characteristic thing that the teams observed in Hermosillo about this election. End Comment.

#### SOME PRELIMINARY RESULTS

17. (SBU) Election votes are still being officially tabulated, but it is already clear that Sonora (and even more so Hermosillo) voters -- probably a majority -- heavily favored PAN candidate Felipe Calderon for president over the PRD's Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and the PRI's Robert Madrazo. Sinaloa, the other state in the Hermosillo consular district, also apparently preferred Calderon by a significant margin. PAN candidates in Sonora for senator and representative slots may have done better than expected, but that conclusion is not as firm.

18. (SBU) One notable election result in Sonora is the PRI party's apparent wins in mayoral races in Hermosillo, Obregon, Navajoa, Guaymas, and Empalme, some of the major population centers in the state. This success could redound hugely to the credit of Sonora's PRI Governor Eduardo Bours, who dominated selection of the party's mayoral candidates in Sonora (including, though, in Nogales, where his hand-picked candidate lost), and conspicuously fended off pressure from the PRI national organization.

CLARKE